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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/05/2019
TAGS: PINR PGOV PREL HO
SUBJECT: (C/NF) AFTERMATH OF PRESIDENT ZELAYA'S RETURN TO
HONDURAS (C-AL9-02049)

REF: STATE 102923

Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b, c, and d)

¶1. (S) This message is in response to questions posed in section A of reftel.

¶2. (C/NF) Liberal Party candidate Elvin Santos and National Party candidate Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo's reactions to President Manuel "Mel" Zelaya was initially negative, but improved after meeting jointly with him. Santos told the Ambassador on September 23 that Honduras was in a worse situation than ever due to the return of Zelaya to the country on September ¶21. Santos express frustration that the international community did not criticize Zelaya's actions. Lobo, during the same September 23 meeting with the Ambassador attended by Santos, stated that Zelaya was always opposed to the holding of the general elections scheduled for November 29 and expressed concern that Zelaya had returned to the country before the election in order to scuttle it. Lobo added that it would be even more difficult to ensure Zelaya's compliance with the terms of the San Jose Accord after he had returned to the country. Martinez, who also attended the September 23 meeting with the Ambassador, said that after the return of President Zelaya it was particularly important for the candidates to seem impartial.

¶3. (C/NF) Santos and Lobo, along with Christian Democratic Party presidential candidate Felicito Avila and Social Democratic Innovation and Unity Party (PINU) presidential candidate Bernard Martinez, met with both de facto regime leader Roberto Micheletti and President Zelaya on September ¶24. The press reported on September 25 that after those meetings, Lobo had said that he would accept the restitution of President Zelaya to the office of president if that is the result of the dialogue that takes place to resolve the country's crisis. According to the press, Santos said that it is not up to the presidential candidates to decide whether President Zelaya should be restored to office, but rather to the judiciary according to the law. The press reported that Avila said he had always called for respect of the law and if he supported a succession of power, it was because he believed that succession was correct.

¶4. (C/NF) Victor Meza, Secretary for Governance and Justice in President Zelaya's Cabinet, told the Ambassador on September 15, before President Zelaya's return to the country, that the pro-Zelaya movement had grown since the June 28 coup. However, what is clear is that Zelaya's return to Honduras, perhaps contrary to Zelaya's expectations, did not trigger an outpouring of tens of thousands of supporters to the streets. The resistance may be fracturing. Oscar Andres Rodriguez, Cardinal of Honduras, told the G-16 donors group on October 1, that the pro-Zelaya resistance is divided into three factions: those who are committed to violence, those who are with President Zelaya in the Brazilian Embassy, and pro-Zelaya Liberal Party members who are putting distance between themselves and the more violent factions of the resistance.

LLORENS